

**In the Claims**

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1. (currently amended) An outsole assembly comprising:  
a heel region ~~n-outsole~~ having an inner surface, an outer surface adapted to be in contact with a walking surface, and an opening extending from said inner surface to said outer surface;  
a footbed positioned over an area of said inner surface of said heel region ~~outsole~~; and  
a plug placed in said opening for enhancing comfort.
2. (original) The assembly of claim 1 wherein the footbed is formed of a material having a first hardness characteristic that is less than an outsole material having a second hardness characteristic.
3. (original) The assembly of claim 1 wherein the plug is formed of a material having a first hardness characteristic that is less than an outsole material having a second hardness characteristic.
4. (original) The assembly of claim 1 wherein the footbed and the plug are formed of a material having substantially the same hardness characteristic.
5. (original) The assembly of claim 1 wherein the outsole is formed of a material having an A-scale durometer hardness in a range between 60A and 100A.
6. (original) The assembly of claim 5 wherein the footbed and the plug are formed of a material having an A-scale durometer hardness in a range between 30A and 60A.

7. (currently amended) The assembly of claim 1 wherein the opening is positioned in a heel region of the inner surface of the hell region~~outsole~~.

8. (original) The assembly of claim 1 wherein the plug includes a pedestal section and a cap section, the pedestal section being connected to the outer surface of the footbed.

9. (original) The assembly of claim 8 wherein the cap section includes an outer peripheral edge having an outer perimeter and an inner peripheral edge having an inner perimeter, the inner peripheral edge being connected to the pedestal section having a pedestal perimeter.

10. (currently amended) The assembly of claim 9 wherein the outer perimeter is the substantially the same as the inner perimeter.

11. (original) The assembly of claim 10 wherein the inner perimeter is larger than the pedestal perimeter.

12. (original) The assembly of claim 11 wherein the inner peripheral edge forms a projecting lip when connected to the pedestal section.

13. (currently amended) The assembly of claim 12 wherein the opening of the heel region~~outsole~~ has:

an opening perimeter that is less than the inner perimeter; and

a corresponding matching perimeter for mating with the pedestal perime-

ter.

14. (currently amended) The assembly of claim 13 wherein the pedestal peripheral dimension mated with the opening peripheral dimension forms a watertight seal between the heel region ~~outsole~~ and the footbed.

15. (cancelled).

16. (currently amended) The assembly of claim 15 wherein the heel region includes ~~outsole has a walking surface including~~ an indented surface corresponding to the inserted plug.

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17. (original) The assembly of claim 16 wherein the indented surface is a non-contact surface with the a walking surface ~~ground~~.

18. (currently amended) A method comprising:  
providing a heel region ~~n-outsole~~ having an inner surface and an outer surface  
adapted to be in contact with a walking surface;  
extending an opening from the inner surface to the outer surface;  
positioning a footbed over an area of the inner surface of the heel region ~~said~~  
~~outsole~~; and  
placing a plug in the opening for enhancing comfort.

19. (original) The method of claim 18 further comprising forming the footbed using a material having a first hardness characteristic that is less than an outsole material having a second hardness characteristic.

20. (original) The method of claim 18 further comprising forming the plug using a material having a first hardness characteristic that is less than an outsole material having a second hardness characteristic.

21. (original) The method of claim 18 further comprising using a material having an A-scale durometer hardness in a range between 60A and 100A for the outsole.

22. (original) The method of claim 18 further comprising using a material having an A-scale durometer hardness in a range between 30A and 60A for the footbed and the plug.

23. (cancelled).

24. (original) The method of claim 18 further comprising providing a pedestal section and a cap section in the plug wherein the pedestal section is connected to the outer surface of the footbed.

25. (currently amended) The method ~~of~~ of claim 24 further comprising forming a projected lip by connecting the cap section to the pedestal section.

26. (cancelled).

27. (currently amended) The footwear assembly of claim ~~26~~28 wherein the footbed is formed of a material having a first hardness characteristic that is less than an outsole material having a second hardness characteristic.

28. (currently amended) An outsole assembly, comprising:

an outsole having an inner surface, ~~a heel area, and a toe area;~~  
an opening extending downwardly from said inner surface into said outsole;  
a footbed extending over an entire said inner surface ~~from said heel area to said~~  
~~toe area;~~  
~~said footbed positioned over said inner surface of said outsole; and~~  
a plug placed in said opening for enhancing comfort.

29. (previously added) The outsole according to claim 28, wherein said plug includes a first protrusion having a first periphery in contact with a lower surface of said footbed and wherein said plug further includes a second protrusion having a second periphery, where said second periphery is larger than said first periphery, in contact with said first protrusion and wherein said first and second protrusions extend downwardly into said opening.

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